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## FLORIDA'S STUDENTS WORKING AGAINST TOBACCO RECEIVE INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR ADVOCACY

*World Health Organization Recognizes Florida Youth for Addressing Youth Vaping Epidemic*



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Milton, FL – Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT), Florida's youth-led statewide organization, is one of six individuals and groups to be honored with a 2019 World No Tobacco Day award for their Not A Lab Rat campaign.

Each year, the World Health Organization (WHO) awards winners to recognize outstanding contributions to the advancement of the policies and measures contained in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The WHO celebrates World No Tobacco Day each year on May 31 to raise awareness of the harmful and deadly effects of tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure.

In 2018, SWAT launched the Not A Lab Rat campaign in response to the epidemic-level spike in youth e-cigarette use around the country and in Florida.<sup>1</sup> The statewide initiative seeks to correct misconceptions about the health consequences related to use of e-cigarettes and urges Florida youth to declare that they will not be test subjects in the vaping industry's long-term experiment.

"It is exciting to see SWAT recognized for its efforts," said Kristie Beckstrom, SWAT Coordinator with the Florida Department of Health, Santa Rosa County. "The Not A Lab Rat campaign promotes our mission to educate youth on the misconceptions of vaping and work towards a tobacco free future."

For decades, SWAT has worked diligently to mobilize, educate, and equip Florida youth in revolting against and de-glamorizing the tobacco industry. SWAT coordinates its efforts through a Youth Advocacy Board (YAB), a 16-member board that consists of SWAT members elected by their peers. The youth leaders elected to the YAB develop statewide initiatives to support prevention efforts and provide web-based and face-to-face trainings to their peers in support of local and statewide advocacy work.

In Santa Rosa County, local SWAT members have promoted the Not A Lab Rat campaign in the school SWAT clubs and at local community outreach events, such as Reimagine and Walk for Mommy and Me.

### About Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT)

SWAT is Florida's statewide youth organization working to mobilize, educate and equip Florida youth to revolt against and de-glamorize Big Tobacco and the e-cigarette industry. SWAT is a united movement of empowered youth working towards a tobacco free future.

To learn more about Students Working Against Tobacco, visit [www.swatflorida.com](http://www.swatflorida.com) or follow us on Instagram at [@swatflorida](https://www.instagram.com/swatflorida).

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<sup>1</sup> Florida Youth Tobacco Survey (FYTS), Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 2018.